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## **SCORE and SBA are a Priceless Source of Business Information for this Start Up**

**St. Louis**—"Nice story," commented George Stephans, St. Louis SCORE Chapter 21 counselor, "now go write a business plan." Seemingly harsh advice to Terri Jordan, a startup entrepreneur and experienced businessperson who had put together a plan she felt explained rather well her idea for a new business. Later, Terri said, "the advice George gave me that day was exactly what I needed - someone to tell the unvarnished truth about what I needed to do to help me get started in my new business." Terri had called the Small Business Administration office in St. Louis to ask for advice about starting a marketing business. The SBA referred her to SCORE volunteer, George Stephans, for counseling and so began a two year mentoring relationship leading to the profitable firm, LCJ Marketing Source, Inc.

Terri Jordan was no stranger to the business world. With an undergraduate and graduate degree in business marketing and retailing, she spent most of the 1990's in retail. Her first and only job during that decade was with a very large well-know retail store where she began as a sales clerk, soon entering the corporate internship training program for training as a store buyer. Within a year, Terri was promoted to merchandise manager and three years later to senior manager.

Terri speaks of the 90's as a time during which she came to understand and appreciate the power of marketing. She learned not only marketing techniques, but also the art of managing employees and retail customers, how to read a profit and loss statement, the skills of budgeting for a several million-dollar department, and the importance of working with a business plan. She says of her employer, "details mattered at our company," a business philosophy that would serve as a focus as she began her own business, a point of view she embraced enthusiastically and that would become her basic business philosophy.

By the end of the 1990's, Terri left the large retail business world. Uncertain of what she wanted to do, but convinced she could run her own show, she took a position in a company specializing in the promotional end of sales and marketing. For the next three years, she absorbed all she could about promotional sales, but never far from her thoughts was the belief she could do as well on her own. She knew she had the technical background to make a success of her own business, merchandising expertise, and the ability to work with people at many levels of business. But, intuitively, she knew that experience alone would not ensure success as a small business owner. She wondered, "Do I have what it takes to succeed on my own - without corporate support?"

Terri was not sure until she read the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Based on a five-year research project, *Good to Great* addresses the question: "Can a good company become a great company, and if so, how?" The answer was surprising simple; there was no miracle moment

when the company became great. Instead, Collins determined good companies became great because they shared, indeed lived, the belief of a down-to-earth, pragmatic, commitment-to-excellence process of hard work, and keeping the company, its leaders, and its people on track for the long haul. In the end, he concluded steadfast discipline won easily over the quick fix.

It was the right message at the right time for Terri and decided to call the SBA for advice about starting her own business. That's when she took her first stab at a business plan and when George thought it was a good story. But four drafts later, LCJ Marketing Source, Inc. was launched.

LCJ Marketing Source, Inc., website ([www.lcjmarketing.com](http://www.lcjmarketing.com)) describes her business as a source of "ideas for generating promotional success" and "that for any activity or event you are planning, there is a product that can be a part of the solution." LCJ Marketing Source, Inc. serves as a creative liaison between clients and thousands of producers of promotional products so she can help her client find just the right product to fit the client's need.

The future for LCJ Marketing looks bright. "I am continuing to steadily increase my sales and maintain profit levels," said Terri. One very important result of the well-prepared business plan was to help LCJ find a customer base focus. Who are their customers? Almost 75 percent of the customers are from the not-for-profit sector. Terri found that even more than for-profits, not-for-profit organizations do more than promote good causes. Promotion also involves employee satisfaction, fund raising, but above all, customer satisfaction.

Terri is so pleased with the mentoring she has received from her SCORE counselors she has recommended two of her close friends who also want to start a business to call SCORE. "I consider SCORE and the SBA to be a priceless source of business information for the startup," says Terri. "And" she adds, "it's free."

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